

**Interdisciplinary Workshop on
Corpus-Based Approaches to Figurative Language.
27 March 2003, Lancaster University**

Metaphor corpora and *corporeal* metaphors

Andreas Musolff (University of Durham)

Abstract:

Cognitive metaphor theory - as it has been developed since Lakoff's and Johnson's *Metaphors we live by* - has highlighted the conceptual function of metaphor by providing evidence of cognitive domain-mapping systems that make up our universe of experiences. Is this conceptual function also of relevance in the public political debate? Lakoff and Johnson's answer is an emphatic *Yes*: "Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor" (1980: 156). Lakoff himself and others have since produced a number of empirical case-studies of the role metaphors play in public discourse in national as well as international politics (cf. Lakoff 1992, 1996, 2001; Chilton and Lakoff 1995; Chilton and Ilyin 1993; Schäffner 1996; Dirven, Frank and Ilie 2001). In many of these studies, however, we find a tension between, on the one hand, strong general claims that suggest that metaphor sources 'guide' social and political practice up to the point of acting as "self-fulfilling prophecies" and, on the other hand, empirical findings revealing a "wide variety of possible entailments" of each individual source domain, which offer "scope for debate and controversy" (Schäffner 1996: 56). If the same source domain can be used to argue for or against specific political positions, its 'guiding' force evidently is ambiguous.

In order to find out if there are politically significant differences in the way metaphor source domains are used in particular discourse communities, we thus have to go beyond the level of 'global' domain-mappings. It is here that corpus-based studies are needed to go beyond a mere illustration of cognitive hypothesis by reference to a few 'fitting' examples. A sufficiently large number of tokens from a well-defined selection of empirical language data will allow a more detailed identification and analysis of distribution patterns with regard to particular thematic areas and to discourse traditions.

The basis for the presentation is a comparative, bilingual English-German corpus of press texts containing metaphorical references to European politics in the 1990s. The corpus consists of a pilot version that comprises some 2100 passages from British and German newspapers from the period 1989-2000 (cf. <http://www.dur.ac.uk/SMEL/depts/german/Arcindex/htm>), plus a second version of all in all more than 20.000 entries. This corpus version has been compiled from two general corpora documenting press language for German and English, i.e. the "Bank of English" at the University of Birmingham and "COSMAS" at the Institute for German Language in Man-

nheim, Germany. For the present study, metaphors from the source domain of LIFE-BODY-HEALTH have been selected. This source domain is among the most fundamental and ancient metaphor systems employed for the conceptualisation of socio-political entities, reaching back, in the Western tradition, to ancient and medieval concepts of the state as a *body politic* (Hale 1971, Struve 1978). In a first overview it becomes evident that by no means all aspects of the source domain BODY-HEALTH-ILLNESS are employed in the modern Euro-political debates. Rather, a few prominent metaphor clusters, such as those of chronic (EURO-)SCLEROSIS, sudden HEART FAILURE and PREMATURE BIRTH dominate the national samples. The analysis thus proceeds in two steps:

- a) in a first survey all *conceptual elements* from the BODY-HEALTH-ILLNESS domain, as well as ‘raw’ figures for their tokens in the corpus, are computed;
- a) in a second step, distributional clusters of collocations and sub-domain topics are identified and analysed as *scenarios* to which specific argumentative conclusions are attached. On this basis, certain argumentative and ideological/attitudinal traditions can be identified that seem to be characteristic for the two national discourse communities.

The distribution shows, for example, that instances of the HEART FAILURE scenario are found primarily in the British sample, and their main function seems to have been to denounce the EU as *rotten* or *sick* at its *centre*. PREMATURE BIRTH metaphors, on the other hand, turn out to be typical of the German debates, where they served to express party-political commitments to *care for the euro*. Thus, the combination of cognitive metaphor analysis with corpus-based methods can reveal characteristic contrasts between uses of aspects of one metaphorical source domain in different discourse communities.

Whilst the proposed scenario-analysis seems to yield interesting results in differentiating metaphor source-domains and interpreting distributional patterns, its methodological premises, especially regarding metaphor detection/identification in general and regarding corpus design, still need to be further investigated and clarified. It is hoped that the discussions at the workshop will provide support and guidance in this respect.

References

- Altenberg, Bengt and Sylviane Granger 2002. *Lexis in Contrast. Corpus-based approaches*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Cameron, Lynne and Graham Low (eds.) 1999. *Researching and Applying Metaphor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Charteris-Black, Jonathan and Andreas Musolff (in press). Battered hero or innocent victim? Metaphors in British and German financial reporting. *Journal of English for Special Purposes*.
- Chilton, Paul and Mikhail Ilyin 1993. Metaphor in Political Discourse: the Case of the "Common European House". *Discourse and Society* 4 (1), 7-31.
- Chilton, Paul and George Lakoff 1995. Foreign Policy by Metaphor. In: Schäffner and Wenden 1995, 37-59.
- Deignan, Alice 1995. *COBUILD English Guides. 7: Metaphor Dictionary* London: HarperCollins.
- Dirven, René, Roslyn M. Frank & Cornelia Ilie 2001 (eds.). *Language and Ideology. Volume II: Descriptive Cognitive Approaches*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- EUROMETA-corpus 2002. <http://www.dur.ac.uk/SMEL/depts/german/Arcindex/htm>.
- Hale, David 1971. *The Body Politic. A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Hunston, Susan 2002. *Corpora in Applied Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kövecses, Zoltán 2002. *Metaphor. A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lakoff, George 1987. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, George 1992. Metaphor and War. The metaphor system used to justify war in the Gulf. In: Martin Pütz (ed.): *Thirty Years of Linguistic Evolution. Studies in the Honour of René Dirven*. Philadelphia/Amsterdam: Benjamins, 463-481.
- Lakoff, George 1996. *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, George 2001. September 11, 2001. *Metaphorik.de*. Internet web-site: <http://www.metaphorik.de/aufsaeetze/lakoff-september11.htm>.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson 1980. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh. The embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Musolff, Andreas 2000a. *Mirror Images of Europe. Metaphors in the public debate about Europe in Britain and Germany*. Munich: iudicium.
- Musolff, Andreas 2001: Cross-language metaphors: *parents and children, love, marriage and divorce in the European family*. In: Janet Cotterill & Anne Ife (eds.): *Language across Boundaries*. London/New York: Continuum, 119-134.
- Musolff, Andreas, Colin Good, Petra Points and Ruth Wittlinger (eds.) 2001. *Attitudes towards Europe — Language in the Unification Process*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Niemeier, Susanne 2000. Straight from the heart — metonymic and metaphorical explorations. In Antonio Barcelona (ed.): *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads. A Cognitive Perspective*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 195-213.
- Schäffner, Christina 1996. Building a European House? Or at Two Speeds into a Dead End? Metaphors in the Debate on the United Europe. In: Andreas Musolff, Christina Schäffner and Michael Townson (eds.): *Conceiving of Europe — Unity in Diversity*. Aldershot: Dartmouth: 31-59.
- Schäffner, Christina and Anita Wenden (eds.) 1995. *Language and Peace*. Dartmouth: Aldershot.
- Sinclair, John 1991. *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sontag, Susan 1991. *Illness as Metaphor. Aids and its Metaphors*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Steen, Gerard 1994. *Understanding Metaphor in Literature*. London: Longman.
- Struve, Tilman 1978. *Die Entwicklung der organologischen Staatsauffassung im Mittelalter*. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann.